I can't quit you baby

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by amandarin_orange21

Summary

Hayden visits Shane in the hospital after he gets his shit rocked by Marlow. It's harder than he expected it to be.

Notes

Hayden doesn't fully understand his feelings for Shane, but he knows that they shouldn't be there.

See the end of the work for more notes

Hayden isn't expecting Shane to be awake when he slips into the hospital room, but he is. Just barely. He's laying in the bed, a lazy, sated smile on his face as he watches whatever sports highlights the nurses have on for him. Well, he's not really watching. He's just kind of vaguely looking in the direction of the TV, barely able to keep his eyes open for more than a second or two at a time. Every once in a while, he'll nod along to whatever the commentators are saying, but Hayden doubts he's even able to articulate their words.

Finally, Shane notices Hayden's arrival. He lights up instantly, and it punches a hole in Hayden's chest. He lets out a shaky breath.

Shane is ok.

For some reason, Hayden's eyes burn. Relief, maybe. He blinks and clears his throat in a desperate attempt to get it together. He's been worried sick since Shane went down. Like, actually sick. As soon as Hayden got off the ice, he made a beeline for the locker room and barely made it to the toilets before he hurled. He knows it's their job. This kind of shit happens all the time. But it *never* happens to Shane, and he went down like a fucking ragdoll. Watching them load him onto the stretcher and cart him off the ice… It was horrifying. And to top it all off, Rozanov was so weird about the whole thing, hovering around anxiously like it was his own teammate who just got their shit rocked instead of his ultimate rival.

"Hayd!" Shane calls out dreamily, his sleepy smile stretching into one that's wide and uninhibited. God, he's completely zooted. It's a miracle he can even tell it's Hayden in the room with him. "*Heeeeey*. Come 'ere. I'm so happy to see you."

Hayden breathes a laugh and sidles through the cramped hospital room over to Shane's bedside. As soon as he's close enough, Shane reaches out and grabs his hand. Hayden's eyes go wide, but he doesn't pull away. It's kind of nice, even though his knuckles are torn up from wailing on Marlow. Shane's hands are careful and soft. Not as soft as Jackie's, but definitely softer than he expects of a professional athlete.

Shane traces a thumb idly over the knuckle of Hayden's pointer finger. He frowns as he grazes a scab. "You're hurt? What happened?"

"Nothing. Just a scrape," Hayden says quickly. His voice is weak and shaky. "How are you?"

"I feel fan-fucking-tastic, Hayd. This stuff is great. It's… I'm… It's,

um…" Shane trails off. He blinks up at Hayden, and Hayden can't help but think he looks kind of adorable like that, with his tired eyes and his terrible bedhead. His thick, dark hair is flat at the back of his head and sticks out in odd angles on one side. There are purple bags under his eyes and yellowing bruises across the bridge of his nose that obscure his freckles, but his cheeks are pink and his smile is easy and he just looks so fucking *cute*. "I don't remember."

A wet laugh bubbles out of Hayden. His eyes are stinging again, and he wipes them surreptitiously on his sleeve. Thank fuck Shane doesn't notice. Hayden gives his hand a squeeze. "That's ok, buddy."

Why is this so hard for him? Why does Hayden feel like he's a light breeze away from completely shattering? He can't do that to Shane, though. Especially not right now. So Hayden swallows hard and squeezes Shane's hand again. He likes having it there, right in his own grasp. Heavy, soothing, his thumb still rubbing gently over Hayden's sore knuckles. The way Jackie might hold his hand at the end of a long day.

Hayden shakes the thought from his mind.

Shane, completely unaware of Hayden's inner turmoil, just smiles dopily up at him, then turns his attention to their clasped hands. "*Hey!* We're holding hands. This is nice."

"Yeah, you did that," Hayden says, matching Shane's goofy smile as best as he can.

"Did I?" Shane asks. He meets Hayden's eye once again, and Hayden pretends he doesn't notice the way his stomach flips. "We should do this more. Why don't we do this more?"

"Because it's— that's not…" Hayden sighs. "Because we're both dudes, Shane."

Shane scoffs. "Oh yeah. It's *gay*, right?" He rolls his eyes. "That's stupid. We do way gayer stuff *all* the time."

Hayden cocks his head at Shane, biting back a grin. "We do?"

"Yeah. Think about it!" Shane glances around the hospital room and lowers his voice like he's revealing some precious secret. Hayden can't wait to hear whatever he's about to say.

"Hockey is so gay. Everyone's always kissing and groping each other

on the ice, and then after, we all change and shower together." Shane shakes his head and Hayden laughs. *"Pretty* fucking gay. I see your bare ass more regularly than Jackie does, probably."

"I wouldn't say *that*—" Hayden cuts in, but Shane barrels on.

"Hey, I'm not complaining. It's a nice ass, Hayd. Is that why you're always pregnant?"

Hayden feels himself flush from the tips of his ears all the way down to his chest. The hand that's holding Shane's prickles with sweat.

"That's, uh… Thank you, I think. But I'm not the one getting pregnant. You know that, right?" Hayden teases. "I know you don't have nearly as much sex as I do, but I figured Lily would've taught you a thing or two over the years."

"Mm. *Lily."* Shane says the name like it's an inside joke between them. There's an attempt at a sly smirk, but he just kind of looks like he's pissing his pants. He's not, though. Hayden checks just in case— he's no stranger to medical grade opioids. "Lily's taught me *a lot* of things."

"That's nice, buddy," Hayden says with an uncomfortable grimace.

He's always been morbidly curious about Shane's sex life. Hayden teases him about the elusive Lily all the time, but Shane never budges. He always insists that they aren't hooking up. Hayden has started to think that maybe they aren't after all, and maybe he's completely wrong about this girl. Because why would Shane lie about that? Wouldn't he want to brag about all the sex he's having? But then something clearly happened between them the last time Shane visited her in Boston. He came back to their shared hotel room a complete mess and wearing different clothes. Unfamiliar, too big clothes that made Hayden realize there's probably a reason why Shane is so skittish about *'Lily.'*

As desperate as he is to know, Hayden does *not* want Shane to spill the beans while he's absolutely blasted on whatever painkiller cocktail he has in his IV drip. Shane would be mortified if he remembered, but even if he didn't, Hayden knows he wouldn't be able to keep a secret like that from him. And anyway, Hayden's not sure he's ready to find out the truth. So, he tries to pivot.

"You… said I have a nice ass?" Hayden says, because he has no idea what else to say, and also because he kind of liked the way it made him feel when Shane said it the first time.

"Oh, yeah," Shane says appreciatively. His eyes fall closed and his smile softens again. "It's great, Hayd. Might be better than Ilya's. Don't tell him I said that, though. He'll be so mad."

"What?" Hayden furrows his brow. "*Rozanov?* Why would he care?"

Shane wrinkles his nose. "He doesn't like you. I think he's jealous 'cause we're so close."

Well, that doesn't clarify shit. Why the hell would Rozanov care if he and Shane are close? And how would he even *know* that they're close? It's not like he and Shane are posting each other all over their social medias and getting spotted out together all the time. Only their families, teammates, and people who follow the Metros religiously would have any idea how close they actually are. Even though Montreal and Boston are major rivals, Hayden doesn't think Rozanov would give a fuck about the social dynamics of the team. So what the hell is Shane talking about?

"Jealous," Hayden echoes, frowning. Shane nods sagely. "I think I might need to tell the nurses to lower the dosage of whatever drugs they're giving you."

"Nooo," Shane whines. He might be trying to pout at Hayden, but he can't keep his eyes open at all anymore. His grip slackens on Hayden's hand and he settles under the thin sheets gingerly. Hayden sighs, letting their fingers untangle and watching as Shane's hand falls to the bed, still poised as though he's waiting for Hayden to take it again. Putting his hands in his pockets feels like every time he turns down a drunk cigarette. *I can't, I quit. If Jackie smells it on me...*

Hayden turns his attention to Shane's face. His lashes are fluttering as he tries to force himself awake, but it's no use. He's fucking exhausted and he needs rest. Hayden should go. But first, he reaches out and combs his fingers through Shane's hair. Just once. It's not enough. Not to fix the bedhead, not to sate the aching feeling in Hayden's gut. But any more than that would be inappropriate.

"I'm gonna go, ok? Get some sleep," Hayden says.

"Love you, Hayd," Shane murmurs.

"Love you too, Shane," Hayden says quietly. Easily. Probably *too* easily. "I'll be back tomorrow."

Shane gives a pleased little hum in response. Hayden nods to himself.

He lingers for a moment, watching the way Shane's lips part as he drifts off to sleep. Hayden reaches out again, but he stops himself just centimeters away from Shane's forehead. He can feel the warmth radiating from his skin, and the ends of his hair tickle Hayden's fingertips. After a pause that lasts much longer than it should, Hayden shoves his hands back into his pockets and leaves the room.

Hayden settles against the back wall of the elevator that will take him down to the lobby. He watches the hustle and bustle of the wing as he waits for the door to close. Just as they start to, Hayden catches a glimpse of sandy blond curls. He slams the heel of his hand against the door open button, but it's too late. The doors shut and the elevator jolts into motion.

It's nothing, Hayden tells himself. There are lots of tall, broad, curly haired blond men in the world. It could be literally anyone. But there's something to the effortless way the man cut through the crowd that's sickeningly familiar.

So maybe Rozanov is here to visit Shane. That's totally normal. It's pretty standard for captains to check on injured players from opposing teams. It's just good sportsmanship. But the visit, *plus* Rozanov's strange behavior on the ice, *plus* Shane's cryptic comments are all raising red flags in Hayden's brain. He'll leave it, though. At least for now. Shane's too vulnerable and Hayden's feeling too volatile himself.

Instead, he does his best to ignore the heavy, sour feeling in his gut, at least until he gets to his car. Then, we he's alone on the top level of the parking garage, he locks his doors, buries his face in his hands, and cries until his head is pounding and his face is puffy.

Because Jackie is perfect and knows Hayden better than he knows himself, she's waiting for him at the door when he gets home. He lets her pull him into her arms, his hands balled into fists and tucked back into his pockets, and he buries his face in the crook of her neck. He feels slimy doing it, but he's so desperate for her comfort. She runs a soothing hand over his hair and whispers sweet words into his ear.

Hayden doesn't cry again. He doesn't think he can anymore. Jackie doesn't ask questions, just holds him and leads him to the bathroom and distracts the kids while he takes a long, hot shower. He tries to scrub away the hospital smell and guilt and shameful desperation that cling to him like stale smoke. Hayden's skin is red and raw when he steps out, but he doesn't feel any cleaner.

End Notes

srry lol

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